

**Homily for October 2, 2005  
27th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**By Father Charles Bowes**

**Isaiah 5:1-7  
Philippians 4:6-9  
Matthew 21:33-43**

## *Human life's value is measured in more ways than by what we can do or produce.*

Our Catholic faith tradition is a staunch defender of human life in all its ages and dispositions.

This is "Respect Life Sunday" in all the parishes of our land where we are encouraged by the words of the late Pope John Paul II to help "build a world where human life is always loved and defended, every form of violence banished." It provides an opportunity to reaffirm the Catholic Church's pro-life position, which defends all life from conception to natural death, and the Church's opposition to abortion, euthanasia, and capital punishment.

Like a fine vintner, God plants the seed of life in the vineyards of our lives. In the secret of our mothers' wombs he made us grow – lives conceived in the mystery of God's infinite love, and the wonder of the love of man and wife which strives to reflect it. God plants the seed. And then what happens? Does he reap a fruitful harvest?

Often, the opposite is true. The vineyards of our lives often produce the wild grapes of selfishness and of fear, which bloom in the morning and fade with the noonday sun. When we lose sight of the fact that God is the creator and the owner of the vineyards, our lives become empty of meaning and fruitless.

In today's Gospel, Matthew chapter 12, Jesus tells the same story about a vineyard, complete with a hedge! However, in his story, he does not plant grapes – but tenant farmers: farmers who also turn into wild grapes! Out of selfishness and greed, they kill first his servants and then his son. "Come on," they say, "let us kill and then we will get rich!" There seems to have been a law in Israel that in the absence of the owner, those who were able to secure immediate possession could claim the property. The tenants were well positioned to make this move.

What makes people end the lives of the unborn and the elderly, the seriously ill or physically challenged, and those convicted of serious crimes? Is it because they want to kill a child, a parent, a weak human being, a criminal? No. People kill because they have turned into wild grapes: They are afraid, or blinded by selfishness, or confused by sin. And so they kill the child, the old, the ill, the infirm, and even the Son of God who was a convicted insurrectionist.

The antidote to this sin is goodness, and love, and truth. For if we live the Gospel of life, we will cultivate God's vineyard, and it will bear only the finest and truest of fruit unto eternal life.

Pope Benedict XVI has dedicated himself to doing everything possible to keep us from growing into wild

grapes. He has begun his ministry by continuing the ministry of Pope John Paul II in declaring “in an unequivocal way the inviolability of the human being, the inviolability of human life from its conception until natural death.” “The freedom to kill,” he reminds us, “is not true freedom, but a tyranny that reduces the human being to slavery.”

To communion today we bring our weaknesses and our hopes in the face of life’s conflicting values. We seek, with God’s help, to tend the vineyard God has planted, to nurture and cultivate the gift of life. And by so striving, Saint Paul reminds us today, we will cling to “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious,” and we will help “build a world where human life is always loved and defended, every form of violence banished.”

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